DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 267 CS 502 957

AUTHOR Hall, Courtney
TITLE Self-Acceptance, Self-Disclosure and Intimacy.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 22p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (71st, Ocean City, MD, April 24-26, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Research; Interpersonal Competence; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Marriage; *Psychological Studies; Self Concept; *Self Esteem

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the degree to which the psychological variable of self-acceptance and the communication variable of self-disclosure served as predictors of the degree of intimacy in a marital relationship. The study involved 72 couples who had been married from 2 to 42 years. The subjects completed four written scales and discussed three topics in tape recorded conversations. (What are the aspects of your daily work that either satisfy or bother you? What were the occasions in your life in which you were the happiest and unhappiest? and What are the sources of reward and dissatisfaction in your marriage?) The results indicated that the degree of intimacy in a relationship was related to the communication variable of self-disclosure but not to the psychological variable of self-acceptance. In addition, the study found that there were gender differences in the association of the self-acceptance, self-disclosure, and intimacy variables that require further investigation. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED188267

SELF-ACCEPTANCE, SELF-DISCLOSURE AND INTIMACY

Courtney Hall

University of Denver

ABSTRACT

A study of 72 married couples suggests that the degree of intimacy in a relationship is related to the communication variable of self-disclosure, but contrary to prediction, was not found to be related to the psychological variable of self-acceptance. A behavioral assessment of self-disclosure was developed to measure disclosure behavior between spouses. Moreover, a multidimensional approach to the construct of self-disclosure was explored to test three dimensions of self-disclosure behavior: frequency, valence and depth. Due to the highly personal nature of the variables under investigation, socially desirable responses were statistically removed from the intimacy outcome. Findings indicate that only the positive valence dimension of self-disclosure and the variable of social desirability were significantly related to the degree of intimacy in the marital relationship. Gender differences were also found. Implications are drawn for different types of relationships (same-sex and opposite-sex friendships, parent-child, and marital), marriage counseling, teaching and research.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Courtney Hall

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

C SS82 957

" Competitively selected paper presented to the Eastern Communication Association Annual Convention, Ocean City, Maryland, April, 1980.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE, SELF-DISCLOSURE AND INTIMACY

Courtney Hall, Ph.D.

An intimate relationship is generally regarded as a highly desirable type of relationship for many people. Currently, there is a widespread popular interest in intimacy as it pertains to human relationships. However, it is just beginning to receive the attention of scholars.

Traditionally, intimacy has been narrowly viewed in terms of only the physical-sexual dimension of a relationship. Moreover, it has often been confused in the literature with the disclosure construct inasmuch as the more confidential information about himself which an individual willingly shares with another, the more "intimate" the relationship between them. Although these may be contributing conditions, neither factor is sufficient either alone or combined to adequately explain the intimacy construct. Obviously, there is need to investigate the multi-dimensional nature of the intimacy construct. In fact, to date there is a lack of empirical research dealing with intimacy as a quality of a relationship.

Two factors which appear to be essential to interpersonal relationships are: the individuals involved in the relationship, and the communication process between them. Questions relating intimacy to these factors are: (1) what characteristics of each individual either encourage or inhibit intimacy in an interpersonal relationship? and (2) what is characteristic of the communication process in an intimate relationship?

Self-theorists suggest that the way in which a person experiences interpersonal relationships is largely a function of how that person views himself (Mead, 1934; Snygg and Combs, 1949; Jourard, 1959; Rogers, 1961; Sullivan, 1950). This implies that self-perception may be a key factor in explaining a person's ability to establish and maintain relationships with others, especially intimate interpersonal relationships with others.

Moreover, investigation of the literature reveals that many theorists have tended to equate the intimacy construct with self-disclosure. There is, however, an essential distinction to be made between these

constructs inasmuch as intimacy is a quality of a relationship that is achieved through the communication process of self-disclosure.

Therefore, this study sought to expand the intimacy research by exploring the multidimensional nature of the intimacy construct. It identified intimacy as a highly desirable quality in intepersonal relationships and suggests that those variables which contribute significantly to the intimacy outcome may be of value in terms of improving the quality of interpersonal relationships in general. This study attempted, therefore, to test the relationship of the degree of intimacy within a significant interpersonal relationship to two variables: the psychological variable of self-acceptance, and the communication variable of self-disclosure. The marital context was chosen to investigate the relationship among these variables because marriage is considered the most significant of interpersonal relationships (Clarke, 1973; Cissna, 1975).

Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance, defined as awareness plus satisfaction with one's self, with a minimum of defense or distortion, has been particularly identified with Carl Rogers' phenomenological theory of self. In fact, it is a therapeutic goal in Rogers' system: "The person who accepts himself will, because of his self-acceptance, have better interpersonal relationships with others (1961, p. 520)." A number of theorists have suggested that the way in which a person experiences interpersonal relationships is largely a function of how he views himself (Lecky, 1945; Heider, 1958; Rogers, 1961; Wylie, 1961; Giffin and Patton, 1974; Greenwald, 1975; Wells and Marwell, 1976). This phenomenological view which seems to represent a common point of departure for much of the empirical research on self-acceptance, considers the self to be reflexive, perceiver and perceived are one and the same organism.

In his client-centered approach to therapy, Rogers (1951) has formulated a three dimensional theory of self: the cognitive, the evaluative, and the affective. The concept of self-acceptance as he used it, involved the affective dimension. Moreover, Rogers contends that a sense of congruency between what a person says and how he really feels, is basic to the development of trust in an interpersonal relationship. This process of congruency, according to Rogers, is what is implied in self-acceptance.

He maintains that self-acceptance allows an individual the freedom to avoid defensiveness with others; it fosters trust and understanding with others which, in turn, nurtures an individual's acceptance of himself.

Sheerer (1949), Stock (1949), and Omwake (1954) found a positive correlation between self-acceptance and acceptance of others; Rogers (1961) measured a gradual increase in self-acceptance correlated with an increase in acceptance of others; and Eastman (1958) found a relationship between self-acceptance and marital happiness. Limited empirical research exists, however, linking the variable of self-acceptance to other variables in a theory, although implications of self-acceptance research appear to be especially important in terms of interpersonal relationships. Research needs to address the importance of self-acceptance in relationship development from the attraction stage through to an intimate relationship. This study extends prior self-acceptance research by focusing on the interactive effects between the variables of self-acceptance and intimacy.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is defined as the process of revealing oneself to another person, either verbally or nonverbally. There is evidence to suggest that self-knowledge comes from disclosing or sharing one's inner self and experiences with another (Rogers, 1961; Powell, 1969; Jourard, 1974). By sharing his "self" with another, a person thereby discovers the "breadth and depth of his own needs, feelings, and values (Jourard, 1974, p. 27)."

Most disclosure research has focused on situational and personality variables associated with disclosure vs. nondisclosure. Recent studies, however, have attempted to identify the multidimensional nature of the self-disclosure construct (Pearce and Sharp, 1973; Wheeless and Grotz, 1975; Gilbert and Whiteneck, 1976; Wheeless and Andersen, 1978). Wheeless and Grotz (1976) found five dimensions of self-reported self-disclosure: 1) consciously intended disclosure; 2) amount of disclosure; 3) positive-negative nature of the disclosure; 4) honesty-accuracy of the disclosure; and 5) control of the general depth or intimacy of the disclosure.

Gilbert and Whiteneck (1976) explored a two-dimensional model of self-disclosure in terms of: 1) degree of personalness; and 2) valence (positiveness or negativeness of the content). They conclude that ". . . a multidimensional approach to the study of self-disclosure in relationship development is a necessity (p. 354)."

In addition to what a person reveals about himself to another (content), the present study attempted to clarify and add to the multidimensional nature of the self-disclosure construct by investigating three dimensions of self-disclosure behavior: frequency (how much is revealed); valence (the positiveness or negativeness of what is disclosed); and the depth or level (the intensity of the self-revelation). This study maintains that these three dimensions are criterial components of the self-disclosure construct and predicts that they may be related to the intimacy outcome in a significant interpersonal relationship.

Frequency of Self-Disclosure

Research findings indicate that frequency of self-disclosure between individuals appears to be the result of numerous factors: degree of liking (Jourard, 1959; Worthy, Gary and Kahn, 1969); reciprocity of disclosure (Jourard and Landsman, 1960; Jourard, 1961; Jourard and Richman, 1963; and Jourard and Friedman, 1970); target person (Jourard and Lasakow, 1958; Jourard, 1959); knowing another person (Jourard and Landsman, 1960; Pedersen and Higbee, 1969); social exchange theory (Derlega and Chaikin, 1973); gender (Jourard and Lasakow, 1958; Cozby, 1973; Gilbert and Whiteneck, 1976); self-esteem (Fitzgerald, 1963; Shapiro, 1968); type of relationship (Jourard and Lasakow, 1958; Levinger and Senn, 1967).

Significantly, researchers disagree in their findings regarding the frequency of disclosure between individuals in a long-term relationship. Jourard (1964) maintains that optimum self-disclosure in marriage is disclosure without reserve. Simmel (1964) supports more reserved self-disclosing behavior between spouses, arguing that some marital difficulties are the result of too much self-disclosure. However, Levinger and Senn (1967) report that there is greater frequency of self-disclosure between satisfied couples than between troubled couples.

If indeed the frequency of self-disclosure varies according to the type of relationship between individuals, as has been reported by many theorists, then it would appear to be worthwhile to study self-disclosure in terms of the framework of the types of relationships. Most of the research on self-disclosure to date has been done between strangers. Very little self-disclosure research has been reported involving friendship or marriage dyads. Therefore, the present investigation has attempted to examine self-disclosure within the

marital relationship in an effort to expand the research in this area.

Jourard and Lasakow (1958) found that disclosure to spouse is greater than to any other target person. This finding may suggest that love is a better indicator of greater disclosure than liking. Levinger and Senn (1967) confirmed their hypothesis that a spouse's reported disclosure would vary directly with his relational satisfaction. They conclude that people tend to communicate more readily and more frequently about "positive" matters than about negative matters. Additionally, they reported that the frequency of disclosure by married couples was greater than that which unmarried individuals communicated to anyone regardless of the relationship.

Valence of Self-Disclosure

What a person chooses to reveal about himself to another may be either positive or negative. Positively valent self-disclosure would include a person's pleasant feelings and attitudes, personal strengths and nonthreatening or successful experiences, whereas negatively valent self-disclosure would include a person's unpleasant feelings and attitudes, personal weaknesses and perhaps, threatening or failure experiences.

The valence of self-disclosure may be considered from either of two perspectives: in terms of the discloser and in terms of the recipient of the disclosure. Thus, the content of the disclosure can be either positive or negative, and the effect the disclosure has on the recipient can also be either positive or negative. Valence of disclosure has been studied empirically from both perspectives.

The valence of self-disclosure has been studied in relation to: frequency of disclosure (Cozby, 1973); relationship development (Blau, 1964; Levinger and Senn, 1967; Bienevenu, 1970; Gilbert and Horenstein, 1975; Gilbert, 1976); self-esteem (Gilbert, 1976); interpersonal attraction (Gilbert and HOrenstein, 1975); target person (Gilbert and Whiteneck, 1976); honesty (Levinger and Gergen, 1969); relational satisfaction (Katz et al. 1963; Levinger and Senn, 1967); and gender (Katz et al., 1963; Gilbert and Whiteneck, 1976).

Using stranger dyads, Gilbert and Horenstein (1975) found that subjects were more attracted to persons disclosing highly positive statements than to persons disclosing even mildly negative ones. Moreover, they found significant

interaction between gender and valence. Females made more positive disclosures to strangers and acquaintances, whereas males made more positive disclosures to parents, friends, and spouses. They conclude that there may be different norms for males and females related to the valence of self-disclosure.

Levinger and Senn (1967) hypothesized that the real test of the degree of closeness in the marital relationship would be "the degree to which spouses can discuss unpleasant matters as well as pleasant ones (p. 238)." Their study found, however, that marital satisfaction was related to the positive valence dimension of self-disclosure, and that troubled married couples evidenced higher frequency of unpleasant disclosure.

This study attempts to clarify these reported findings between the valence and frequency dimensions of self-disclosure behavior in a long term relationship. Are gender differences different in long-term relationships such as marriage? Does the valence outcome reported by Levinger and Senn really "test" the degree of closeness in the marital relationship?

Depth of Self-Disclosure

Altman and Taylor (1973) maintain that an inverse relationship exists between the amount and depth of disclosure, such that an individual tends to disclose less about more intimate (depth) topics. According to their social penetration theory, these researchers contend that self-disclosure to another moves along a depth continuum which consists of levels or layers of personality exposure. The peripheral layers of an individual's personality have to do with biographical characteristics, middle layers concern attitudes and opinions, and the more central or innermost layers of an individual's personality have to do with fears, self-concepts, and basic values. These researchers contend that the more central layers of an individual's personality are characterized as unique and as having low visibility, that is, not readily accessible to others. Their theory further postulares that the greater the depth of a characteristic, the greater the probability that it represents a vulnerable aspect of an individual's personality--such as real or perceived inadequacies or weaknesses about the self.

Levinger and Snoek (1972) suggest that the deepest level of self-disclosure involves "unique to the dyad"emotional investments, interdependencies, and mutualities of need satisfactions.

Significantly, the deepest level of disclosure is often referred to in the research as personal or "intimate" self-disclosure, and yet as a dimension of the self-disclosure construct, it is not to be confused with intimacy as a type of

relationship. Gilbert (1976) maintains that self-disclosure, even intensely personal disclosure, is a necessary but insufficient condition for an intimate relationship to occur. She contends that there is a clear distinction between intitmate disclosure and an intimate relationship. Obviously, there is a need to clarify the relationship between the depth dimension of self-disclosure and the property of intimacy in relationships.

Disclosure in Marriage

Most self-disclosure research has been conducted on stranger dyads, and thus, there are very few empirical studies dealing with the effects of self-disclosure in the marital relationship. Results of these few studies report that wives tend to disclose more than husbands (Jourard and Landsman, 1960; Jourard, 1961); satisfied spouses disclose more than dissatisfied spouses (Levinger and Senn, 1967) intimate disclosure occurs most consistently in the marriage relationship (jourard, 1961; Levinger and Senn, 1967); marital satisfaction is related to self-disclosure (Komarovsky, 1964; McCroskey and Wheeless, 1976).

Gilbert (1976) suggests that a moderate degree of disclosure appears to be the most conducive to maintaining relationships over time. And McCroskey and Wheeless (1976) suggest that a moderate level of reciprocal self-disclosure of feelings appears to be directly related to marital satisfaction. This same finding is reported in a study, conducted in 1964 by Komarovsky, which concluded that very low disclosure revealed an unsatisfactory marriage.

Intimacy

Intimacy between friends and lovers involves more than information exchange regardless of the content of the information. Self-disclosure, or exposure of one' thoughts and feelings and personal information about one's self to another, alone, does not constitute intimacy in a relationship. However, it is through self-disclosure that intimacy between two individuals is achieved. Gilbert (1976) offer a sharp distinction betweenintimacy as the highest depth or level of disclosure and intimacy as a property of a relationship. She maintains that although disclosure is an established index of communicative depth in human relationships, it does not guarantee an intimate relationship. "Intimacy refers not only to the depth of exchange, both verbally and nonverbally, but also to the depth of acceptance or confirmation which characterizes a relationship (Gilbert, 1976, p. 213)."

In the present study, intimacy is defined as a quality of a relationship shared by two people which is characterized by high mutual involvement, caring and

commitment to each other, with a desire for decreasing distance (psychological, emotional, and physical) between the self and the other. Current popular use of the term "intimacy" is often misleading. Although it is believed by many people to be the extent to which one "knows" another in a relationship, intimacy does not exist in one person or partner alone. There is more to the concept of intimacy than merely knowing another. Oden (1974) emphasizes the receptive side of a relationship which involves "being known" by another. According to Oden, the intimacy construct implies the mutual sharing of one self with another--interdependently knowing and being known.

Nor does intimacy necessarily involve a sexual relationship. Cissna (1975) contends that there are two concepts frequently confused with intimacy: sexual contact and relational satisfaction. He argues that intimacy is achieved through interpersonal communication, not through secual relations, and that people vary in their degree of satisfaction with high and low intimate relationships. He suggests that although it is often confused with satisfaction in a relationship, intimacy is not a necessary condition for achieving relational satisfaction.

Currently, little empirical research exists on intimate interpersonal relationships. Many studies refer to intimacy as a type of relationship, but few studies have focused on intimacy as a quality of a relationship or on intimacy as a variable. Kinsler (1973) identified four measures of the intimacy construct as he defined it: amount and depth of self-disclosure, amount of affect, and overall openness. He found support for the idea that an identity of some kind is necessary before a person can have open, intimate interactions with others.

Oden (1974) describes one component or dimension of intimacy as "being understood emotionally." This view is consonant with Dahms' (1972) hypothesis that there are three levels of intimacy: physical, intellectual, and emotional, and that these levels are interrelated and strive for higher order intimacy which is emotional intimacy.

In an attempt to develop an instrument to measure the construct of emotional intimacy, Olmsted (1974) found a positive relationship between her components of intimacy and a self-disclosure construct. Cissna (1975) attempted to predict the level of intimacy in an interpersonal relationship from communication behaviors. Using married couples as subjects, he found that neither facilitative communication nor self-disclosure contributed to predictive intimacy. Moreover, he did not find significant correlations between the communication variables and intimacy.

Terminological confusion exists in the literature regarding the intimacy construct. While intimacy involves the degree of closeness between individuals,

self-disclosure is the process of revealing one's thoughts, feelings, and personal information about one's self to another. Self-disclosure is a specific communication behavior often associated with the "closeness" of a relationship. A need exists, therefore, to clearly conceptualize and differentiate between intimacy as a personal level of disclosure and intimacy as a property of a relationship.

The literature seems to suggest that the variables of self-acceptance, self-disclosure and intimacy are interdependent. Since the self-acceptance variable has been found to be related to a person's acceptance of generalized others (Sheerer, 1949; Stock, 1949; Phillips, 1951; Berger, 1952; Omwake, 1954; Rogers, 1961), it would appear to follow that self-acceptance would also be related to one's acceptance of a specific other, and in particular, of an intimate other. Moreover, self-acceptance is reported to be derived from disclosing oneself to another, yet one's ability to disclose to another appears to be a function of his self-acceptance.

Certainly within the framework of interpersonal communication, self-disclosure has been found to contriubte significantly both to the growth and development of the self, as well as to the growth and development of one's interpersonal relationships. This suggests that self-disclosure may be a mediating variable between the self and the individual's relationships with other people.

Therefore, to provide a systematic explanation of the basic relationship among the variables of self-acceptance, self-disclosure and intimacy, this study investigated the degree to which self-acceptance and self-disclosure serve as predictors of the degree of intimacy in a significant long-term interpersonal relationship.

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were 72 married couples (144 individuals), whose participation was solicited by the researcher at their respective churches throughout a large metropolitan area. No denominational boundaries were established, and therefore, subjects were drawn from various denominations: protestant, Catholic and Jewish.

Subjects were couples who had been married at least one year. They ranged in age from 19 to 74 years and length of years married ranged from 2 to 42 years.

Measuring Instruments

Phillips' Self-Acceptance Scale. The 50-items for this scale were derived from descriptions of self-other attitudes reported by Sheerer (1949). Phillips converted these descriptions into simple statements to form a questionnaire of 50 items; 25 of these items refer to self attitudes, and the other 25 items refer to attitudes toward others. Only the 25 items which measure attitude toward the self were used in this study. Test-retest reliability was .84. Concurrent validity was confirmed (Omwake, 1954) at .41 correlation between Phillips' Scale and others.

Behavioral Assessment of Self-Disclosure. Three topics of conversation were selected from Jourard's 21-Item Self-Disclosure Questionnaire Rated for Intimacy Value. Jourard (1971) had 30 male and 30 female college students rate the items on this questionnaire according to the depth level from low (rating of 5) to high (rating of 1). Numbers signify the mean depth value. The investigator selected one item from each of these dpeth levels:

Topic One (Low Depth): What are the aspects of your daily work that either satisfy or bother you? (4.53)

Topic Two (Medium Depth): What were the occasions in your life in whi you were the happiest? and unhappiest? (3.9

Topic Three (High Depth): What are the sources of reward and dissatisfaction in your marriage? (2.16)

Eight raters were trained to analyze the tapes according to the following: 1) identify each self-disclosing statement; 2) classify self-disclosure as to the depth along a continuum of 1 (low) to 3 (high); 3) indicate the valence of each disclosure; 4) record the frequency or number of disclosive statements by each partner. Inter-judge reliability was assessed in three steps: First, judges were to identify a self-disclosing statement using two different sample tapes of varying difficulty. The second step was to train judges to rate: depth of the disclosive statement on a continuum of low to high; and valence, either positive or negative. Third, was to identify the level of agreement reached from among the eight judges. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) used to test the degree of inter-judge agreement found significant agreement ($W = .672$, $p < .01$) among the eight raters on all three dimensions of self-disclosure. A post-reliability check comparing the ratings of 10 tapes assessed by paired judges found 75 percent agreement among judges for frequency of disclosure, 75 percent for valence, and 63 percent for depth on all three topics. Concurrent validity was tested with responses from Jourard's 40-Item SElf-Disclosure Questionnaire by means of a regression analysis.

Jourard's 40-Item Self-Disclosure Questionnaire. This instrument was administered only as a validity check for the self-disclosure behavioral assessment developed in this study.

Caring Relationship Inventory (CRI). 18 items of the "Being Love" subscale of Shostrom's CRI was used to measure the degree of intimacy in a relationship. The CRI contains 83 items concerning feelings and attitudes of a male and female pair for the other member and consists of 7 scales to measure the following elements of the caring relationship: affection, friendship, eros, empathy, being-love, and deficiency love. Shostrom developed the BEing-Love subscale based on Maslow's theory which characterized being-love as healthy, independent caring for the other. Split-half reliability on Being-Love subscale of the CRI is .82. Construct validity was established by the consistent ability of the scales to distinguish between self described successfully married couples, troubled couples and divorced individuals.

Social Desirability Scale (Marlowe and Crowne, 1964). Research indicates that individuals tend to respond in a socially desirable way to questionnaires (Crowne and Stephens, 1961). Due to the highly personal nature of the variables under investigation in this study, it was necessary to include some form of control for socially desirable responses. In an observational setting, as was used in this study it is expected that individuals will be somewhat more restricted in responding than they would in their natural environment. Moreover, it is assumed that some people involved in an observational study of this nature, which focuses on highly personal information, will tend to respond for the "public eye" and cautiously rather than naturally. Therefore, means were used in this study to statistically remove the influence of socially desirable kinds of responses from each other instrument.

Thus, four written scales and a tape-recorded conversation were administered to subjects in this study.

Procedure

The researcher made appointments with each couple and conducted the session either at their home or at their church. As many as 5 couples were tested in one session. Subjects were given as much time as necessary to complete the four written instruments and were instructed not to talk to each other during this time. After the questionnaires were completed, each couple was given a written list of three topics to be discussed in a tape-recorded conversation. The researcher read these topics aloud to the couple, instructed them to discuss each of these topics in order, answered any procedural questions, gave instructions in the use of the tape recorder, and then left the couple alone in a room with the door closed to

begin their timed tape-recorded conversation. Every ten minutes, a knock on the closed door signaled the couple to move on to the next topic on the list. A double knock on the door indicated the conclusion of this session.

RESULTS

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to remove the influence of social desirability from the subjects' responses on each questionnaire. In order to do this, social desirability was forced as the first step. Results indicated that for wives, social desirability accounted for 6 percent of the variance in intimacy ($r = .2492$, $R^2 = .0621$, $F = 4.634$, df 1,70, $p < .05$). The second variable selected was positive valence on topic one ($r = .3548$, $R^2 = .1259$, $F = 4.969$, $p < .01$) also accounting for 6 percent of the variance in intimacy. These were the only two independently significant predictors of intimacy for wives.

TABLE I here

Social desirability was also significant for husbands ($r = .4111$, $R^2 = .1690$, $F = 14.239$, df 1,70, $p < .001$), accounting for 17 percent of the variance in intimacy. Positive valence on topic three was the second variable selected ($r = .4661$, $R^2 = .2173$, $F = 9.577$, df 2,69, $p < .001$), accounting for 5 percent of the variance in intimacy. The third variable selected was medium depth on topic one ($r = .5227$, $R^2 = .2733$, $F = 8.523$, df 3,68, $p < .001$), accounting for 6 percent of the variance. The fourth variable selected was frequency on topic two ($r = .5568$, $R^2 = .3100$, $F = 7.524$, df 4,67, $p < .001$), accounting for 4 percent of the variance.

In addition to social desirability, there are six predictors of intimacy for husbands which together account for 37 percent of the variance. There are four independently significant predictors of intimacy for husbands: positive valence on topic three, medium depth on topic one, frequency on topic two and positive valence on topic two.

TABLE II here

Treating the data for couples (pairing husband and wife scores), social desirability was a significant predictor of intimacy ($r = .3595$, $R^2 = .1293$, $F = 10.391$, df 1,70, $p < .001$), accounting for 13 percent of the variance. The second variable selected was positive valence on topic one ($r = .4713$, $R^2 = .2221$, $F = 9.849$, df 2,69, $p < .001$), accounting for 9 percent of the variance. The third variable selected was positive valence on topic three ($r = .5210$, $R^2 = .2715$, $F = 8.445$, df 3,68, $p < .001$), accounting for 5 percent of the variance. The fourth variable selected was self-acceptance ($r = .5584$, $R^2 = .3119$, $F = 7.591$, df 4,67,

p .001), accounting for 4 percent of the variance in initmacy for couples. Altogether there were eleven variables selected accounting for 44 percent of the variance in intimacy for couples.

TABLE III here

DISCUSSION

Self-acceptance and three dimensions of self-disclosure behavior were hypothesized to be related to the degree of intimacy in a relationship. Results indicate that the positive valence dimension of self-disclosure on topic one and social desirability were found to be the only significant predictors of intimacy for wives, together accounting for 13 percent of the variance; whereas for husbands there were five independently significant predictors of intimacy: social desirability, positive valence of self-disclosure on topics two and three, medium depth on topic one and frequency on topic two, accounting for 31 percent of the variance in intimacy.

Social desirability was the most significant predictor of intimacy for husbands, accounting for 17 percent of the variance, whereas the positive valence dimension of self-disclosure was the most significant predictor of intimacy for wives, accounting for 7 percent of the variance. Nevertheless, social desirability was the next most significant predictor of intimacy for wives accounting for 6 percent of the variance.

Apparently husbands responded to this study in a socially desirable way which significantly influenced their intimacy scores. Although wives also responded cautiously or for the "public eye," results indicate that, for wives, positive valence of self-disclosure was a more powerful predictor of intimacy than social desirability. Possibly, men become accustomed in their daily work situations to responding according to accepted and public social mores, and responded this way also to the observational nature of this study, whereas females may be less restricted in this way.

No correlation was found between self-acceptance and intimacy for wives, but there was a correlation between these variables for husbands ($r = .4411$, $p < .01$). However, the independent contribution of self-acceptance to the total amount of variance in intimacy for husbands was not found to be significant.

Gender Differences

Gender differences are apparent in this study which produced evidence that the positive valence of self-disclosure seems to be important in high depth topics for husbands and in low depth topics for wives. This would appear to be explained by the fact that for most wives in this study, their daily work (Topic One--low depth) involved their home and family, whereas the daily work for husbands was less related to the home and family. It follows that positive disclosures about their home and family would have a direct bearing on the degree of intimacy with their spouse for wives, whereas discussing their work situation outside the home would not necessarily be related to the degree of intimacy in the marital relationship for husbands.

Moreover, positive disclosures were more important for husbands than for wives in discussing the rewards and dissatisfactions in their marital relationship (Topic Three--high depth). Evidently, for husbands positive disclosures about their marital relationship rather than their work environment are significantly related to the degree of intimacy with their spouse. Topic salience is a dimension of the self-disclosure construct which was not examined in this study but which apparently relates to gender differences.

In this research, gender differences are apparent not only in regard to topic salience, but also in regard to social desirability. Evidently, the relationship between the positive valence dimension of self-disclosure and intimacy is heavily influenced by the variable of social desirability for both husbands and wives in this study. Social desirability was found to be a significant predictor of intimacy for both husbands and wives.

However, the discrepancy between the percent of variance accounted for in intimacy for husbands and wives indicates that husbands responded in a more socially desirable way than did wives to the intimacy measure. This finding suggests that husbands are perhaps more accustomed to hiding their true feelings and may tend to respond more cautiously in observational situations such as in this study. Wives, on the other hand, were not as heavily influenced by concern for social approval in this type of situation.

Perhaps the clearest finding to emerge from this research is that the positive valence dimension of self-disclosure is significantly related to the intimacy scores obtained for wives and husbands. Evidently, self-disclosure is related to the degree of intimacy in a relationship, to the extent that positive disclosures tend to correlate with the degree of intimacy.

A twofold benefit has been derived from this research: it explored a behaviora approach to the study of self-disclosure in the marital relationship, and it has expanded the multidimensional study of the self-disclosure construct. Additonally, this research has attempted a distinction between the self-disclosure and intimacy constructs and has found social desirability to be a significant component of the intimacy construct for both husbands and wives. Further, this research has found that there are gender differences in the association of the self-acceptance, self-disclosure and intimacy variables which requires further investigation.

TABLE I

A Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Interrelationships between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable for Wives (N = 72)

Step	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Multiple r	R^2	F
1	Intimacy	Social Desirability	.2492	.0621	4.634*
2	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 1	.3548	.1259	4.969**
3	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 3	.3776	.1426	3.769*
4	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 2	.4121	.1699	3.427*
5	Intimacy	Medium Depth Topic 2	.4284	.1835	2.967*
		Total:		18% of variance	

*$p < .05$ level of significance

**$p < .01$ level of significance

TABLE II

A Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Interrelationships between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable for Husbands (N = 72)

Step	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Multiple r	R^2	F
1	Intimacy	Social Desirability	.4111	.1690	14.240***
2	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 3	.4661	.2173	9.577***
3	Intimacy	Medium Depth Topic 1	.5227	.2733	8.523***
4	Intimacy	Frequency Topic 2	.5568	.3100	7.525***
5	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 2	.5812	.3378	6.735***
6	Intimacy	Medium Depth Topic 3	.5958	.3549	5.961***
7	Intimacy	Self-Acceptance	.6073	.3688	5.342***
		Total:		37% of variance	

***$p < .001$ level of significance

TABLE III

A Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Interrelationships between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable for Couples (N = 72)

Step	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Multiple r	R^2	F
1	Intimacy	Social Desirability	.3595	.1293	10.391***
2	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 1	.4713	.2221	9.849***
3	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 3	.5210	.2715	8.445***
4	Intimacy	Self-Acceptance	.5584	.3119	7.591***
5	Intimacy	Medium Depth Topic 1	.5773	.3333	6.598***
6	Intimacy	Positive Valence Topic 2	.5975	.3570	6.014***
7	Intimacy	Low Depth Topic 2	.6078	.3694	5.357***
8	Intimacy	Medium Depth Topic 2	.6347	.4028	5.312***
9	Intimacy	Frequency Topic 2	.6464	.4179	4.945***
10	Intimacy	Low Depth Topic 1	.6536	.4271	5.137***
11	Intimacy	Medium Depth Topic 3	.6609	.4368	4.730***
		Total:		44% of variance	

***$p < .001$ level of significance

References

Altman, I. and D. Taylor. Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.

Cissna, Kenneth. "Facilitative Communication in Interpersonal Relationships: Empirical Test of a Theory of Interpersonal Communication." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Denver, 1975.

Crowne, D. and M. Stephens. "Self-Acceptance and Self-Evaluative Behavior: A Critique of Methodology." In The Self in Social Interaction, 145-154. Edited by Chad Gordon and Kenneth Gergen. New York: John Wiley, 1968.

Giffin, Kim and Bobby Patton. Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Readings. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Gilbert, S. "Empirical and Theoretical Extensions of Self-Disclosure." In Communication Perspectives, 197-215. Edited by Gerald Miller. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1976.

Gilbert, S. and D. Horenstein. "The Communication of Self-Disclosure: Level vs. Valence." Human Communication Research, 1975, 1, 316-322.

Gilbert, S. and G. Whiteneck. "Towards a Multidimensional Approach to the Study of Self-Disclosure." Human Communication Research, 1976, 2, 347-355.

Greenwald, Jerry. Creative Intimacy. New York: Pyramid Books, 1975.

Jourard, Sidney M. Self-Disclosure: An Experimental Analysis of the Transparent Self. New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1971.

Jourard, S. and Robert Friedman. "Experimenter-Subject Distance and Self-Disclosure." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1970, 15 (3), 278-282.

Jourard, S. and M. Landsman. "Cognition, Cathexis, and the "Dyadic Effect' in Men's Self-Disclosing Behavior." Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1960, 6, 178-186.

Jourard, S. and P. Richman. "Factors in the Self-Disclosure Inputs of College Students." Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1963, 9, 141-148.

Knapp, Mark L. Social Intercourse: From Greeting to Goodbye. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978.

Komarovsky, Mirra with J. H. Philips, Blue-Collar Marriage. New York: Random House, 1964.

Levinger, George and D. Senn. "Disclosure of Feelings in Marriage." Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1967, 13, 237-249.

Levinger, George and J.D. Snoek. Attraction in Relationships: A New Look at Interpersonal Attraction. Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1972.

Marlowe, D. and D. Crowne. "Social Desirability Scale." In The Measure of Social Psychological Attitudes. Edited by John P. Robinson and P.A. Shaver. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, 1973.

McCroskey, J. and L. R. Wheeless. Introduction to Human Communication. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1976.

Oden, Thomas. Game Free: A Guide to the Meaning of Intimacy. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Olmsted, Suzanne. "Emotional Intimacy: A Construct Validation of the Elemental Components of Decreasing Distance Behavior." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado, 1974.

Pearce, W. Barnett, and S. Sharp. "Self-Disclosing Communication." Journal of Communication, 1973, 23, 409-425.

Shostrom, Everett. The Caring Relationship Inventory. San Diego: Edits, 1975.

Simmel, Georg The Sociology of Georg Simmel. Translated by K.H. Wolff. New York: Free Press, 1964.

Wheeless, L. "A Follow-Up Study of the Relationships Among Trust, Disclosure and Interpersonal Solidarity." Human Communication Research, Winter, 1978, 4, 143-157.

Wheeless, L. and J. Andersen. "An Empirical Test of Social Penetration and Indices of its Critical Components." Paper presented to The International Communication Association Convention, Chicago, April, 1978.

Wheeless, L. and J. Grotz. "Self-Disclosure and Trust: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Inter-Relationships." Paper presented to the International Communication Association Convention, Chicago, April, 1975.

Wheeless, L. J. Grotz, and D. Coyne. "Self-Disclosure and the Development of Trust." Paper presented to the Western Speech Communication Association Convention, San Francisco, November, 1976.